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My name is Chad Podolak. I come before your committee today in support of a movement to update Michigan's Paternity Act. Senator McManus has drafted Senate Bill 197, which to my knowledge is the latest of several efforts to provide fathers a means to obtain legal rights to their children. For myself, the importance of this Bill is not in its "cause" (obtaining father's rights) but rather in its "effect" (children's rights). The effect grants a child the opportunity for heritage, belonging, self-confidence, family medical information and understanding.

As you are well aware, this type of a discussion quickly becomes laden with emotion. While I hope you hear the level of emotion involved from some of the others in attendance today, I pray what you eventually hear is your inner sense of right. I believe if you listen close what you'll hear, and ultimately conclude, is that any and all children deserve the "effect" this bill could perpetuate.

Now, in retrospect, instead of spending time in education classes, I wish I had taken up law because I really don't understand its word. In fact, the only thing I really understand about the word of this law is that fathers in similar situations to myself don't have legal rights to their children. I understand the four years my daughter spent loving and living with my family and I had to be 'stricken from the record' because of this law.

From what I've read and been told, the changes Senator McManus has proposed in SB 197 won't change anything for my family. It wouldn't cause me to have any rights to my daughter nor would its effect give her any privilege to what is rightfully hers. My support of this particular bill doesn't come from how it could help my family. Instead it stems from an idea that when something is as inherently wrong as this law people should take steps towards a correction.

I do hope the extent to which 197 helps my family can be improved upon by modifications. We live in a time when society readily accepts technology like DNA testing as fact enough to sentence a person to life in prison yet can't completely accept it to give rights and privileges to fathers and their children. This bill really needs to be amended so it is open to that option. Regardless, I applaud the efforts of Senator McManus and each of you for taking what I hope to be the first step of many towards a much needed updating of Michigan Paternity Law. Should you have any questions, comments or concerns now or in the future, please don't hesitate to ask or contact me. Thank you for your time.

Best regards,



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